

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The claims are 1-3, 5-7, 9-12, and 18 with claims 13-17 being withdrawn from consideration by the Examiner as directed to a non-elected invention. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 4, which the Examiner indicated contained allowable subject matter. Accordingly, claim 4 has been canceled, and claim 5 has been amended to depend on claim 1. In addition, claim 8, which the Examiner also indicated contained allowable subject matter, has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 18. Accordingly, claim 8 has been canceled, and claim 9 has been amended to depend on new claim 18. The Specification has also been amended to include the cross-reference to related applications. Reconsideration of the claims is expressly requested.

Applicant hereby affirms the previously-made provisional election, with traverse, of Group 1, claims 1-12. It is noted that claims 13-17 have been withdrawn from further consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention.

Claims 1-3, 7 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the prior art discussed on pages 1-3 of the specification in view of *Iwahori et al. U.S. Patent*

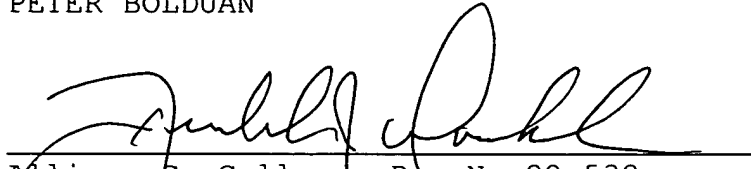
No. 4,326,960. The Examiner has also indicated, however, that claims 4-6 and 8-11 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response, in order to expedite the prosecution of this case, applicant has amended claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 4, has rewritten claim 8 in independent form as new claim 18, has canceled claims 4 and 8, and has amended claims 5 and 9 to depend on amended claim 1 and new claim 18, respectively, so that all claims now depend directly or indirectly on either claim 1 or claim 18. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims that are under consideration are now in condition for allowance.

In summary, claims 1-5 and 9 have been amended, claims 4 and 8 have been canceled and new claim 18 has been added. The Specification has also been amended. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the claims be allowed and that this case be passed to issue.

Applicant also submits herewith a Second Supplemental
Information Disclosure Statement.

Respectfully submitted,
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Enclosure(s): Second Supplemental Information Disclosure
Statement

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Maria Guastella